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NSC BRIEFING

9 September 1959

LAOS

- I. Military strategy and tactics in northern Laos ^{ARE} very similar to those employed in war against French in Indochina:
- A. Rebels concentrating on hit and run guerrilla war which best calculated exploit weaknesses of Laotian army and unstable loyalties of populace.
 - B. Major Commie effort directed against Sam Neua Province and southern part of Phong Saly. These areas ^{HAVE} been heavily saturated with groups reported up to battalion size.
 - C. Since 30 August attack on Nam Ma river posts by a force believed to comprise three battalions, enemy patrols have reportedly penetrated several times to outskirts of Sam Neua town.
 - 1. During this period there ^{WAS} widespread skirmishing throughout Sam Neua province and southern Phong Saly.
- II. In other provinces of northern and central Laos, Communists are conducting ambushes and propagandizing villagers.
- A. Small bands are ambushing army troops and have publicly executed some village headmen in campaign of intimidation.
 - B. Communist propagandists are inciting populace to rise up against government.

State Dept. review completed

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B. Multitude of circumstantial evidence, however, leaves no doubt of North Vietnamese complicity. Following are some salient points:

1. Incursion in Tchepone area last January--North Vietnamese are still there.
2. Incitement of Laotian populace by Hanoi and Peiping radios.
3. Hanoi-Peiping broadcasts in June and July describing "civil war" in Laos, when in fact fighting not yet begun.

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5. Highly coordinated 30 August attacks along Nam Ma River, where eye-witnesses described second wave of attackers as non-Lao and speaking Vietnamese.

6. Fact that rebels are well armed with new weapons and apparently have plentiful ammo supplies although no arms or ammo manufactured in Laos.

IV. In face of these pressures, morale of top Laotian officials and military continues high and their anti-Communist resolve firm.

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- A. Lao government gratified by prompt US emergency aid and UN response, and confident of appropriate additional external support, particularly from US, if military situation worsens.
1. Crown Prince Savang, recently named regent, advocating greater military role in government but so far put off by Premier Phoui.
- B. On other hand, morale of troops, officials and populace lowers in proportion to distance from Vientiane and is generally poor in fighting areas.
1. Absence of effective communications and logistical support emphasizes cut off feeling of isolated garrisons.
 2. Ill-informed masses highly susceptible to aggressive propaganda campaign being waged by Communist agents.
 3. Morale of both troops and populace adversely affected by panicky attitude displayed by civil authorities in exposed areas.
 4. Arms and equipment of army have been pitifully inadequate even for normal security operations; it lacks just about everything required for a fighting force.
 - a. In past few days, efforts been made to relieve critical shortages in Phong Saly and Sam Neua.
 - b. Under present conditions, it will be most difficult to undertake vitally needed training.
- V. Current monsoon rains, while hampering Lao military, air and ground operations, has not prevented broad deployment of Communist guerrilla and propaganda bands throughout northern and central provinces.

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- A. These enemy activities may be prelude to nationwide expansion of all-out guerrilla operations when rainy season slacks off about mid-September to mid-October leading into five month dry season.

VI. On the international front, Laotian Foreign Minister Khamphan Panya has assured our Ambassador in Vientiane that an appeal to SEATO would be temporarily deferred.

- A. In Bangkok, where he visited SEATO Secretary-General Pote Sarasin, Khamphan issued statement on 7 September saying Laotian situation was deteriorating and "if the UN was too slow to act, Laos will have to appeal to SEATO."

- B. However, the Crown Prince is pressing Premier Phoui for an immediate appeal and we can't be certain that SEATO won't be approached within near future.

- A. Pote Sarasin has told our Ambassador in Bangkok that he felt Thai government would be willing send troops if assured of US backing.

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IX. Asian Communist regimes have responded to Laos' appeal for a UN Emergency Force with intensified propaganda attacks.

A. North Vietnam's Foreign Ministry information department on 5 September branded appeal as an "American move to interfere more deeply in Laos and prepare war against the Democratic People's Republic of Vietnam," [REDACTED] 25X1

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- B. A North Vietnam Foreign Ministry statement on 9 September protesting UN Security Council commission to investigate Laotian situation charged this action was intended to annihilate the ICC for Laos.
- C. Peiping on 6 September accused US of "using the name of UN for armed intervention in Laos."
- D. North Korea's Foreign Ministry asserted on 7 September that "US activities against Laos are reminiscent of situation in 1950 when they provoked the Korean war."

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